It's Worth Saving Drinking Water

Metering: The First Step To Improving Efficiency

Metering is the most important part of a water-use efficiency program. Source and service meters provide the data necessary for water demand management and planning. A successful – and measurable – customer conservation program is not as effective without service meters.

Service metering, when combined with a consumption-oriented rate structure and, if possible, a bill that shows current and previous year consumption information, is the most effective way to change customers' water-use patterns. Generally, customers are more likely to modify water use behaviors if they know they will pay more for greater than normal consumption.

Comprehensive metering also allows systems to reduce unaccounted-for water by being able to find leaks more quickly.

Impacts of Metering

The expense of metering can have a significant impact on capital budgets, especially for smaller water systems, and is often most easily achieved through a phased retrofit program.

The installation of meters should be considered within the context of long-term system maintenance and development. The following considerations can mitigate the short-term financial impacts of meter installation:

- The installation of meters, coupled with other conservation measures, may allow systems to increase efficiency and/or expand connections without developing new sources or storage facilities.
- Meters are the foundation for a rate structure that can provide for funding of capital improvements, including the meters themselves.
- Metering helps systems identify high-use customers and take steps to lessen their impact on the system.
- The identification of unaccounted-for water losses is made easier with meters, and allows systems to recover capacity through leak repair.

For assistance with water use efficiency planning, contact your regional water conservation specialist.

Northwest Regional Office - 253-395-6769

Southwest Regional Office - 360-664-2543

Eastern Regional Office - 509-456-5067

Washington State Department of Health

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Financing Meters

The cost of installing metering can vary significantly depending on a number of variables, such as required excavation, condition of pipe, etc. Typically, meter installation for new construction costs less than installation in an existing connection, which involves higher labor and excavation costs.

Several methods or combinations of methods are available to finance the installation of meters. Financing options for privately owned systems are more limited than for public systems, such as water districts, public utility districts, cities and towns.

Publicly owned systems

- Commercial loans
- Water system budget reserves
- One-time customer surcharge, or incremental or phased surcharges
- Municipal bonds
- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, when meter installation is part of a construction or reconstruction project
- Rural Community Assistance Corporation
- Public Works Trust Fund, Office of Community Development

Privately owned systems

- Commercial loans
- Water system budget reserves
- One-time customer surcharge, or incremental or phased surcharges
- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, when meter installation is part of a construction or reconstruction project

Where To Get More Information

Water Conservation Guidebook For Small and Medium-Sized Utilities, American Water Works Association, Pacific Northwest Section

Water Conservation Planning Handbook, Washington State Department of Health

Water Conservation Measures, National Drinking Water Clearinghouse

Financial Resources for Water Use Efficiency Improvements information sheet, Division of Drinking Water